

BY RAYMOND COGNAT

**BRAQUE**





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# BRAQUE





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BY RAYMOND COGNAT

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*Title page: THE YOUNG BRAQUE 1913*  
Pen by JÓZSEF BIRÓ  
Professor of the Academy of Art, Budapest.  
12" x 18", Private Collection

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*Translated from the French by*  
EILEEN B. HENNESSY

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LANDSCAPE AT L'ESTAQUE, 1906  
Oil, 23¼" x 28½". Private Collection

So much has been written and so many ideas have been put forth concerning Braque and his work, often by the keenest minds, ranging from Jean Paulhan to Dora Vallier, that since it is impossible to restate them one is tempted to adopt the opposite solution: to try to forget everything, to ignore the episodes of his life as far as possible and retrace the stages of his work, just as one approaches an unknown territory. We have often wished that a work of art was admired independently of the incidents of the period which witnessed



*Nude Study, 1908. Etching, 10 3/4" x 14 6", Museum of Art, Basle*



*Flower Study, 1909. Charcoal, Private Collection*



its birth or the events experienced by the man who created it: a work of art in pure form, isolated from its protective covering of development, and liberated from the matrix in which it was formed.

It is unthinkable, however, to envisage Braque's work — and especially his role in the birth of Cubism — in this independence, for no matter how personal it may be, it is nevertheless a phenomenon determined by its age. On the contrary, we must constantly return to the facts, not for their picturesque character, but in order to understand the profound meaning of this orientation in the first half of the twentieth century. To begin with, the artist's social position must be kept in mind, for his place within a well-defined system always explains one aspect of his art, even when the latter appears to be individual and independent.

The entire art of the nineteenth century is marked by the accession of the middle class to positions of control and political, social, and economic management, that is, the acquisition of power by the class which possessed the material and financial means. To the same extent as Impressionism, Romanticism exists as a function of this class, although the latter often began by refusing that which was destined for it. Almost all of the most original artists, those whose strong personalities scandalized people because they destroyed routinism, belonged to this middle class — modest in the case of Corot, powerful in the case of Manet, always prosperous, a class that regarded art as a superfluity, not as a goal, and especially not as a reason for or a means of living.

To be sure, there were a few exceptions, such as Daumier and Renoir. They can be considered precursors, heralds of a democratization that was to begin at the end of the century and of which the pathetic battle of Van Gogh is the shining example: the artist of humble origin, possessed by a faith, desperately pursuing the discovery of himself by his own means, an involuntary rebel by his very nature, and one who is obliged to discover his path alone, the honest craftsman who with goodwill learns the formulas of his trade without having to reinvent everything if he wishes to fulfill himself.

In short, during the nineteenth century, artists were produced by a middle class of aristocratic and conservative tendencies, a society of notables composed of manufacturers and important functionaries. As a consequence of the evolution of ideas and customs, the young artists who were to enter active life at the beginning of the twentieth century and give new orientations to art sprang generally from another environment, from a proletarian and republican middle class consisting of merchants and craftsmen. Derain's family were bakers; Braque's father was a house painter, while Rouault's father was a cabinetmaker, and Vlaminck was a bicycle racer.

Braque thus belonged completely to this new generation, to this solid, obstinate artisan class in which new ideas were accumulating and becoming ingrained. Born at Argenteuil on May 13, 1882, from his birth he had been prepared for the existence, since first his grandfather and then his father had managed a house-painting business and, for relaxation, had sometimes painted canvases, some of which revealed sufficient skill to win their acceptance for the Salon des Artistes Français.

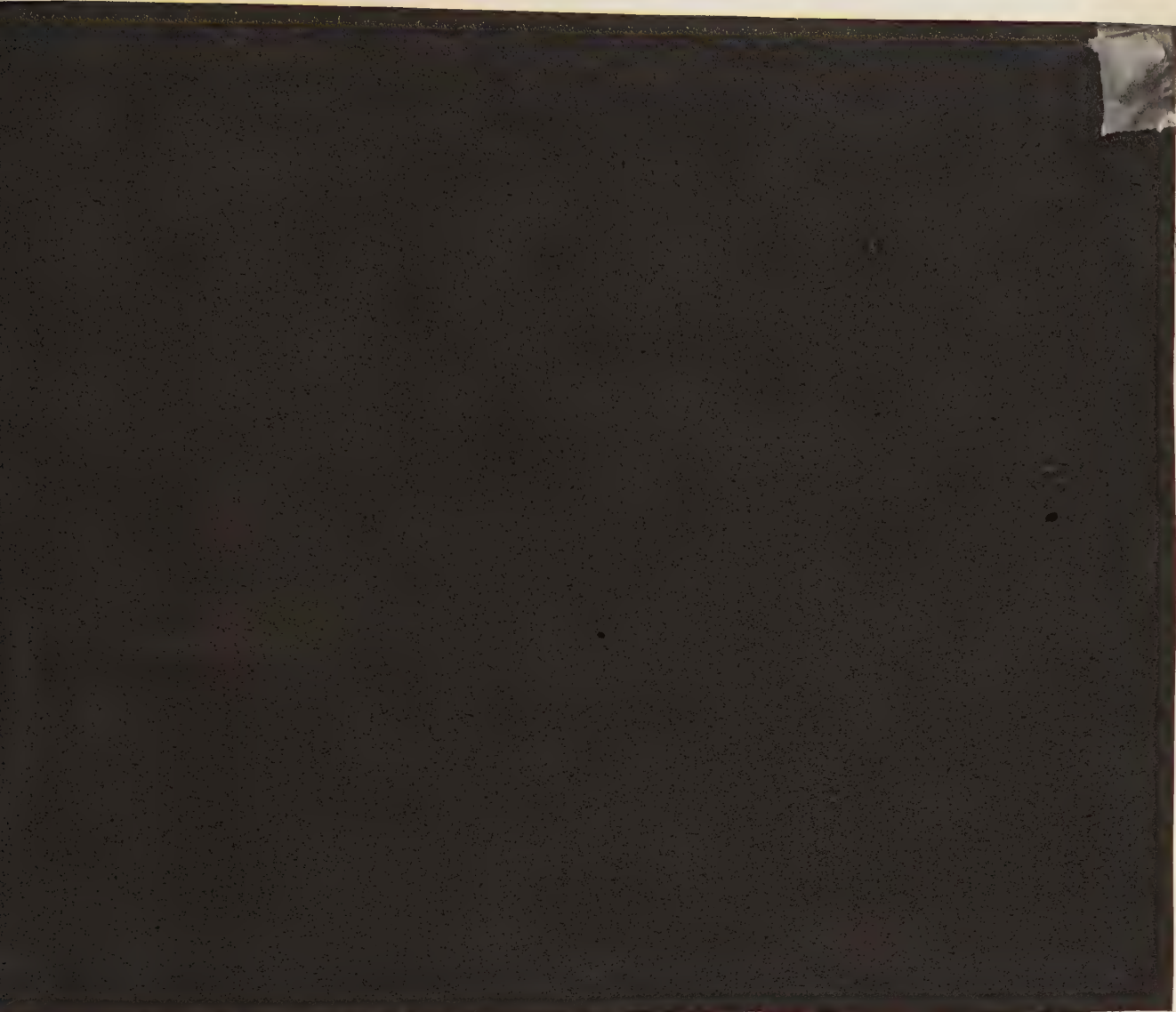


THE BOATS AT COLLIOURE, 1906  
Oil, 18½" x 21½". Private Collection, Geneva









LA CIOTAT, 1907  
Oil, 23½" x 28¾". Private Collection

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STANDING NUDE, 1907  
Oil, 55" x 39½"  
Collection of  
Mme Marie Cuttoli, Paris



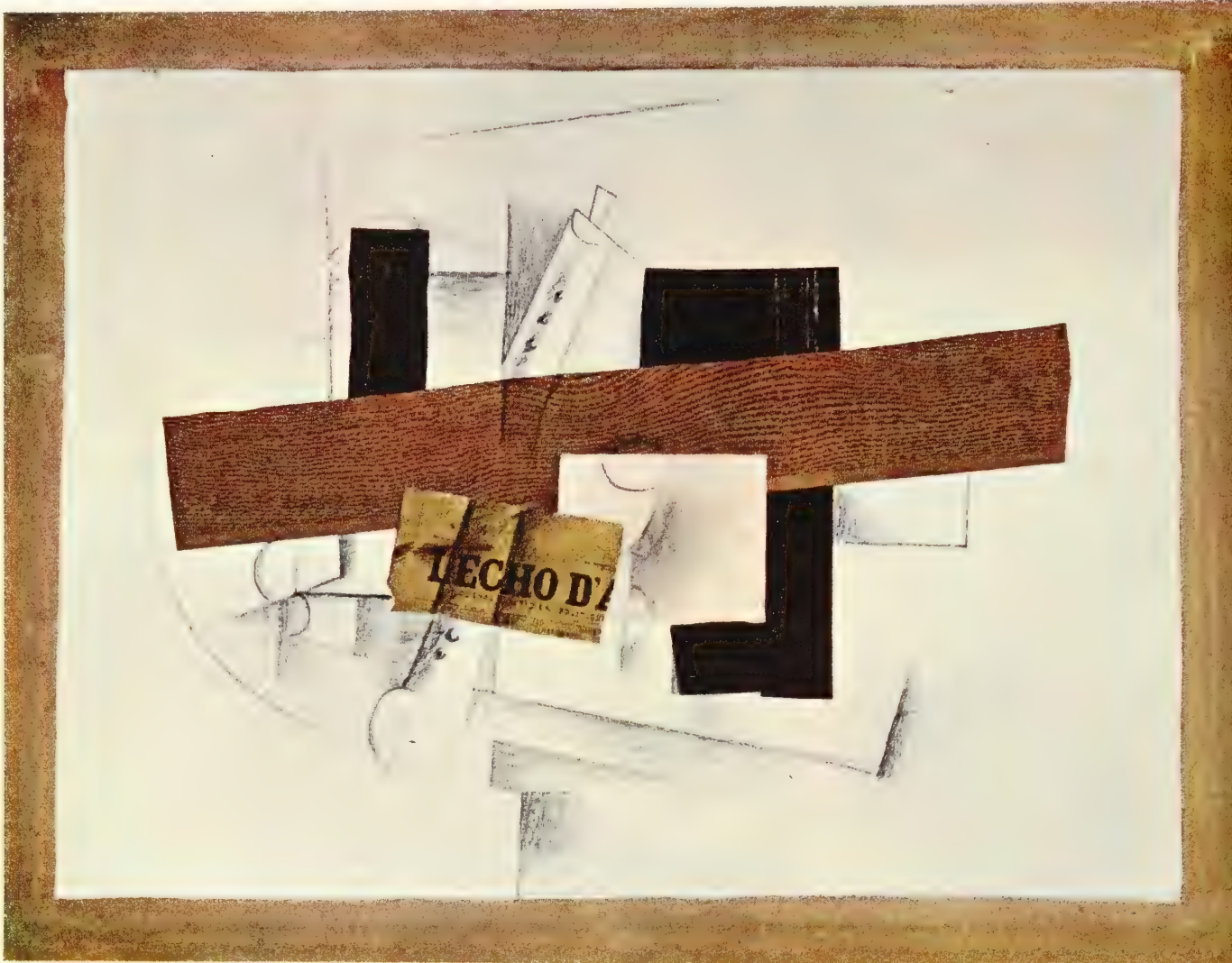
SEATED WOMAN, REAR VIEW, 1907  
Oil, 21½" x 18". Collection of D. H. Kahnweiler, Paris





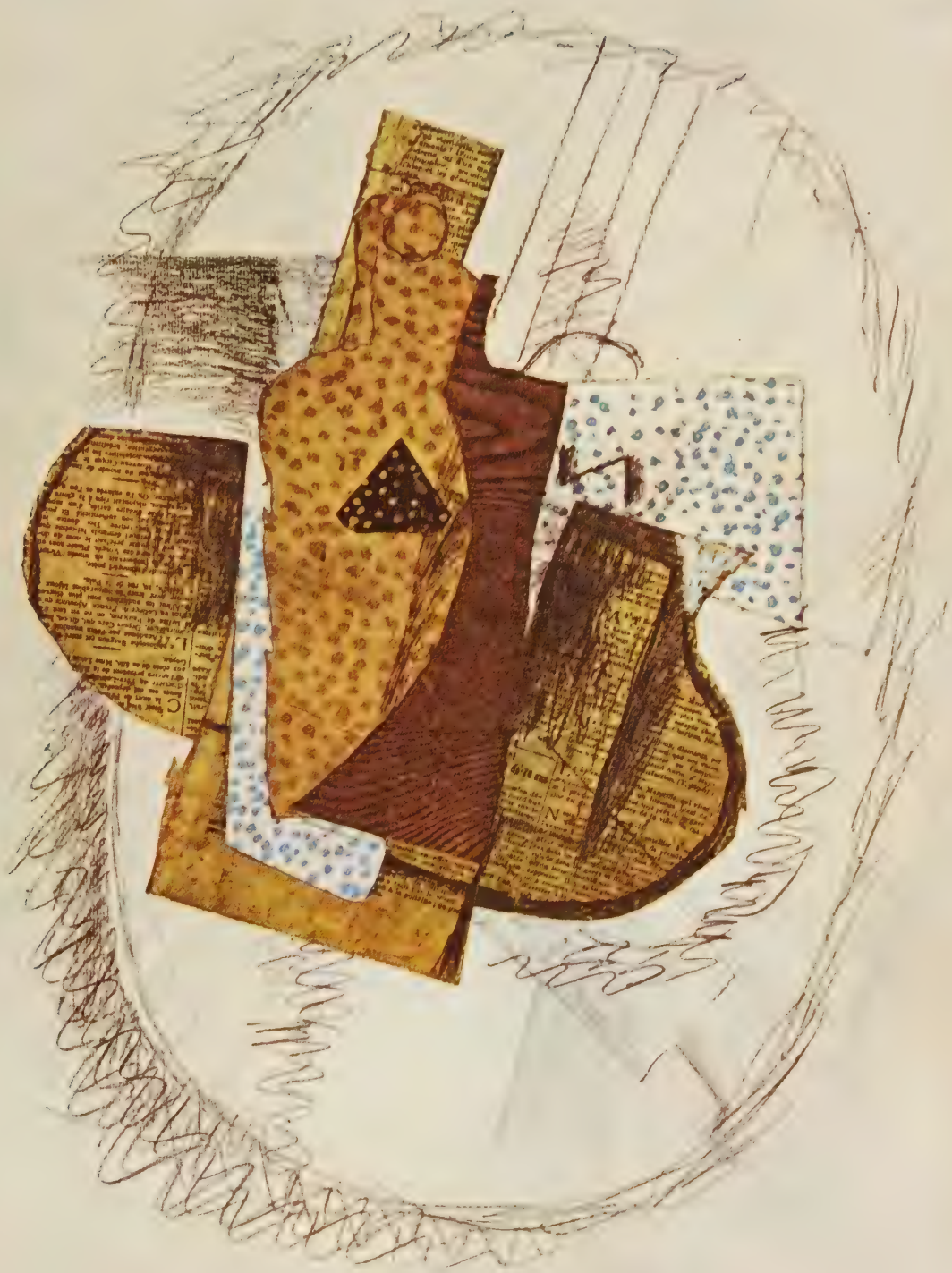
*Fishing-boat*, 1909. Oil, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", Private Collection



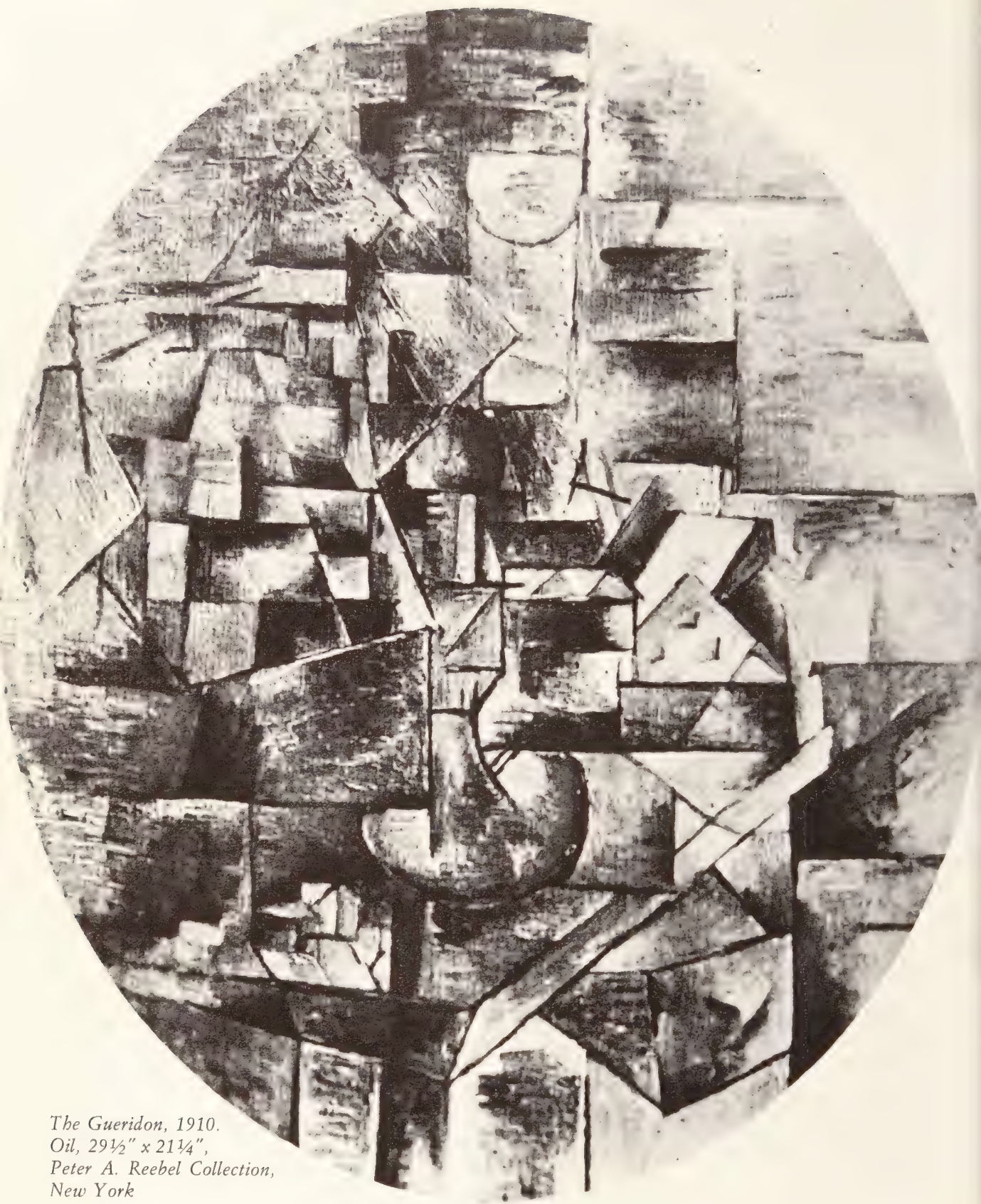


THE CLARINET, 1913  
 Papier collé, 37½" x 47". Private Collection, New York

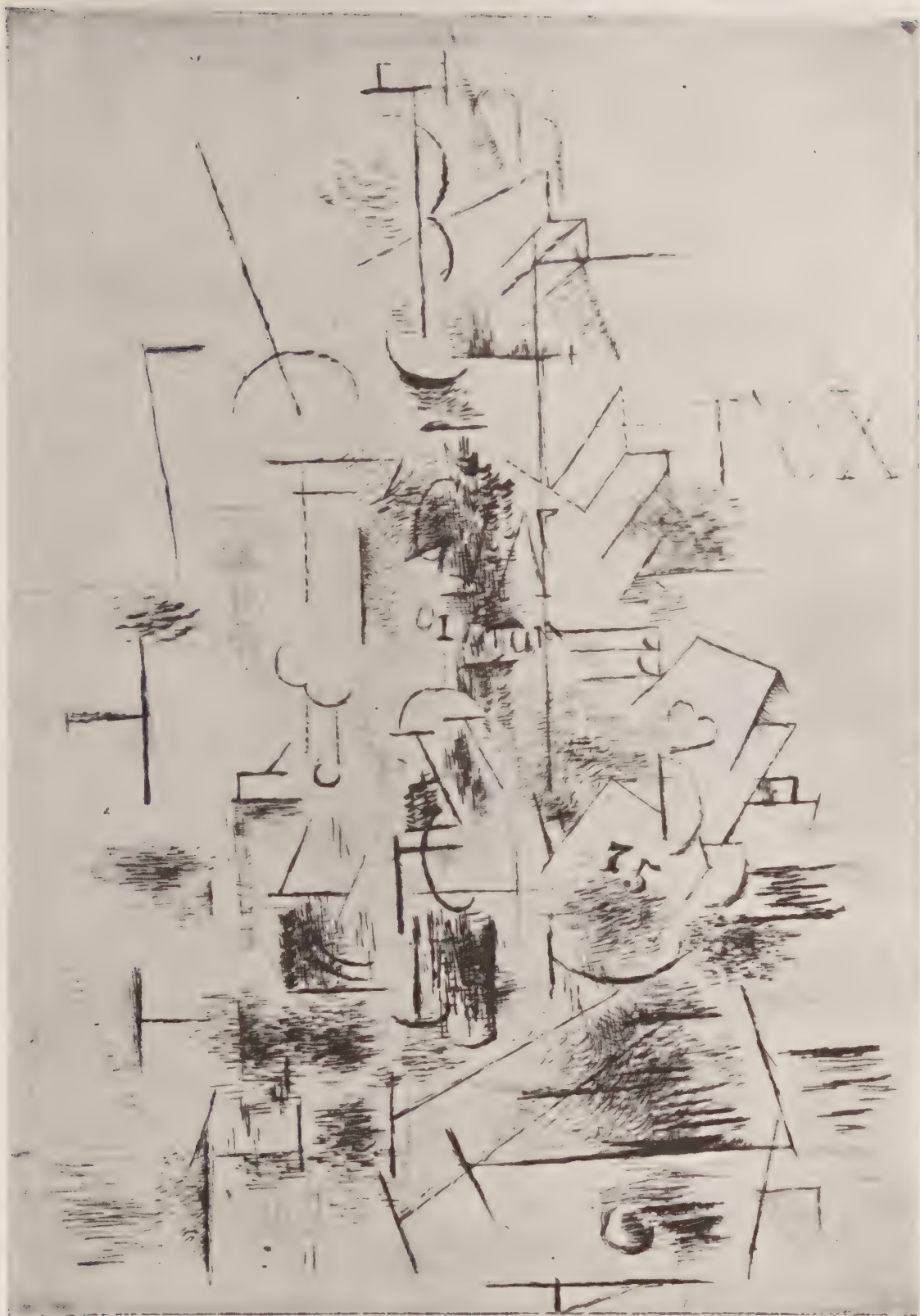
COMPOSITION, about, 1914  
 Papier collé, 24¾" x 11".  
 Private Collection, Basel







*The Gueridon*, 1910.  
Oil, 29½" x 21¼",  
Peter A. Reebe Collection,  
New York



*Still Life «Fox», 1911. 21½" x 15", Museum of Art, Basle*



In 1890 the family business was moved from Argenteuil to Le Havre. Young Georges entered the high school of that city three years later. Soon he was simultaneously taking evening courses at the École des Beaux-Arts — that same École des Beaux-Arts in which Raoul Dufy and Othon Friesz had preceded him only a short time before — learning drawing from plaster copies of sculptures of antiquity, with M. Courchet as his teacher. These were years without a history and without picturesque anecdotes, but were, however, quite significant, by virtue of the fact that Braque approached his destiny in a most normal fashion, without family opposition, without opposition in his inclinations, and without being forced to struggle against the pressure of an orientation which was not suited to him.

Being disinclined to continue his other studies, at the age of 17 he went to work in his father's business. In 1899 he became an apprentice to the painter-decorator Roney, in order to be initiated into the techniques of the craft. At the École des Beaux-Arts he had got as far as the study of oil painting. At the end of 1900 he went to Paris, where he settled in the rue des Trois Frères in Montmartre, went to work for Laberthe, a former employee of his father, in order to continue his training as a painter-decorator, and in the evening attended the free public course in drawing, directed by Quignolot, at the Batignolles.

His year of military service, which he fulfilled near Le Havre starting in October 1901, scarcely interrupted his activity, since by 1902, back in Paris, he returned to live in the rue Lepic in Montmartre and to work at the Académie Humbert in the Boulevard Rochechouart. From that moment on he gave up the idea of following his father's career, and decided to devote himself to painting. After a brief sojourn at the École des Beaux-Arts (in Léon Bonnat's studio) in 1903, he returned to the Académie Humbert.

He had already formed friendships with other artists, not only with his seniors, Friesz and Dufy, but also with other young artists: Marie Laurencin, Picabia, and soon Manolo and Maurice Raynal. He went to Honfleur with Dufy in 1904, and to Arles, in 1906, with Friesz. When he rented a studio in 1904 in the rue d'Orsel, he gave up taking the lessons which the Académies were able to give him and decided to work alone. His visits to museums and galleries, particularly the Louvre and the galleries of Durand-Ruel and Vollard, in the rue Laffitte, were more enriching and stimulating for the ideas which he had felt awakening within him for the past few years and which were beginning to take shape.

In 1907 he exhibited seven paintings at the Salon des Indépendants. All seven were sold. From then on he belonged to the avant-garde which was beginning to revolutionize the accepted ideas about painting. During various sojourns in the south of France he discovered themes which allowed him to express the new theories and techniques which resulted. In 1906 he went to L'Estaque, and in 1907 to La Ciotat.

D. H. Kahnweiler, a young dealer who had recently set himself up in the rue Vignon, became interested in him and introduced him to Guillaume Apollinaire, through whom he became acquainted with Picasso. In this same year of 1907, in his studio in the Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre, the latter showed Braque and several close friends his famous composition « *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, » which can be regarded as the break with the pictorial tradition that had been followed since the Renaissance.



*Sacré Coeur (Sacred Heart)*, 1910. Etching, 21½" x 16¼", Dutilleul Collection, Paris







Braque's destiny was definitively committed. Several of his canvases having been refused at the Salon d'Automne of 1908, he had a private exhibition at Kahnweiler's gallery, sent two paintings to the Salon des Indépendants of 1909, painted several landscapes in the environs of Paris (la Roche-sur-Yon, Carrières-Saint Denis), returned to L'Estaque in 1910, spent the summer of 1911 at Cérét with Picasso, settled in 1912 at Sorgues, returned to Cérét in 1913 and again to Sorgues in 1914, where the declaration of war called him to the colors. He did not return until 1918, convalescent and invalided out of the service after having been wounded in May 1915 and trepanned. His return to health was celebrated in Paris in 1917 with a banquet.

The war had profoundly changed individual destinies and had written « finis » to the nineteenth century; art had begun an international expansion which was to acquire challenging scope beginning with the early days of the postwar period. As we have noted, the coming of age of this young generation in the early years of the century was perceptibly different from that of earlier generations. Without even going back to Murger's romantic Bohemia, we need only compare the life-styles of the Impressionists with those of the Cubists and the Fauves to understand how different the general spirit was. The Impressionists relaxed in the suburban *quinquettes* with their music and dancing, in waterside villages, with games on sunny Sunday. Braque and the artists of his generation remained in the city, participated more closely in the daily life of the people, played the accordion. The Impressionists avoided living in Paris, and settled in the small towns in the Seine and Oise valleys. Their successors were for the most part inhabitants of Montmartre and belonged to the urban Bohemia. After the war they were to leave Montmartre and settle on the Left Bank, colonizing Montparnasse and Vaugirard. Braque settled at first (in 1912) in the avenue Reille, then, in 1925, in the rue du Douanier on the edge of the Montsouris Park, in a house built for him by Auguste Perret.

The contrast with the Impressionists was also corroborated in the choice of landscapes. Braque, like his friends Friesz and Dufy, did not confine himself for long to the banks of the Seine. The Cubists and Fauves quickly showed a preference for the Riviera, Provence, and the ports near the Spanish frontier. Braque, however, never completely forgot the ocean horizons of the Channel, and in 1930 he built a house at Varengeville, near Dieppe, where he frequently came to work, far from the excitement of the city.

Without affecting misanthropy or asceticism, and also without any desire to make himself conspicuous, Braque was always able to preserve his independence and ignore the manifestations of snobbery and the eccentricities for which his period was famous. From the birth of Cubism he was regarded as one of the greatest artists of his generation, and his reputation continued to spread and assert itself. While he remained apart from fads and exhibitions, his reserve, which bordered on solitude, did not acquire the appearance of an arrogant response to the exaggerations of fashion. Simply, he needed quiet in order to work, and the result of this circumspection was that the great success which he enjoyed could never be attributed to intrigue.

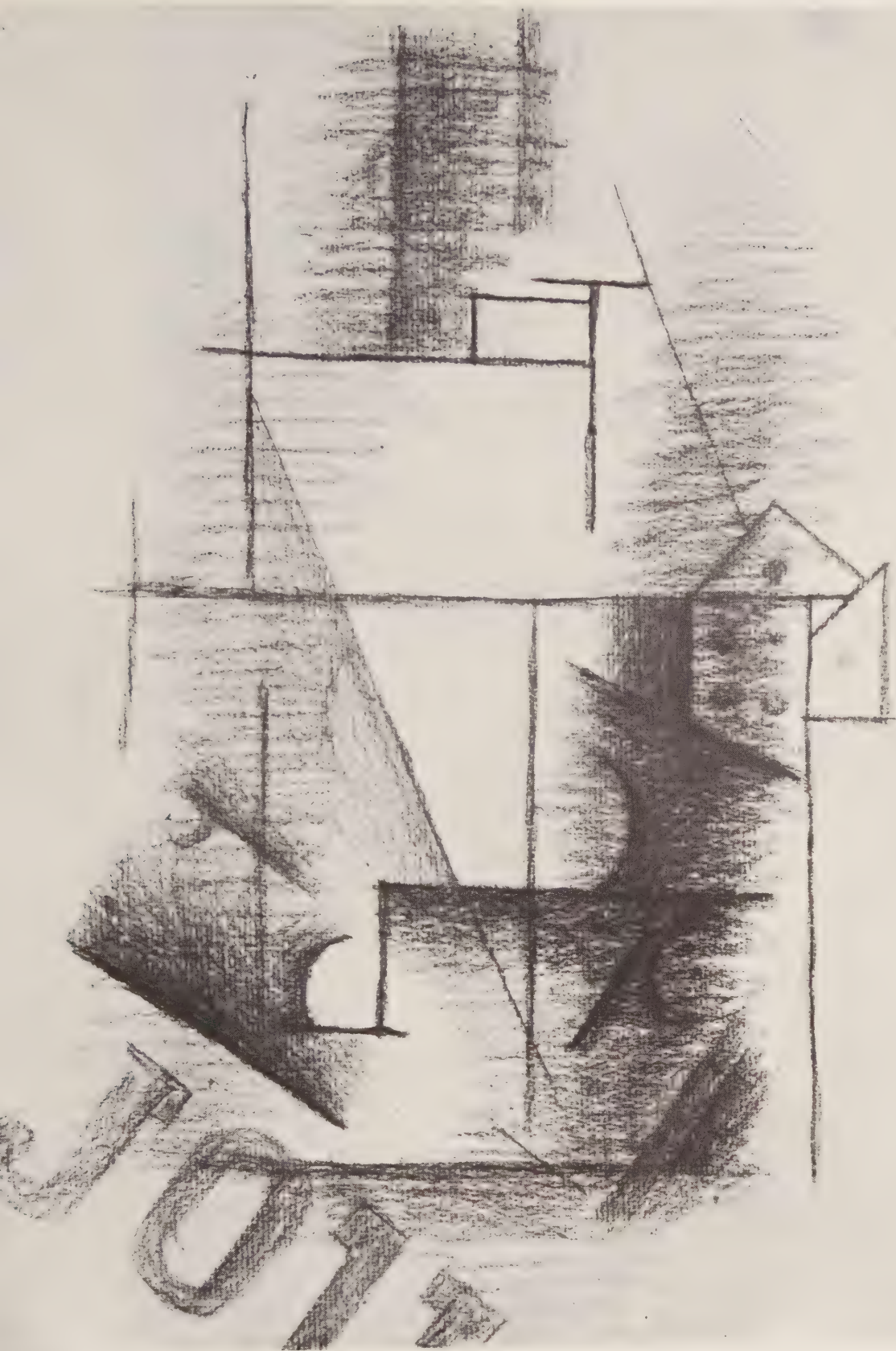
From the very beginnings of Cubism, Braque's originality became evident, and quick-





*Jug and Violin*, 1914. Oil, 9½" x 12½", Museum of Art, Basle





*Still Life*, 1913-14. Charcoal, 5¼" x 4¼", Museum of Art, Basle





*Woman Standing*  
1920.  
Bronze, 8¾" ht  
Private Collection

THE BASKET  
OF FLOWERS, 1917  
Etching,  
11" x 6 1/8".  
Galerie Maeght,  
Paris







BOTTLE AND GLASS, 1914  
 Papier collé and charcoal, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 18".  
 Private Collection, Basel





THE GUITARIST, 1917  
Oil, 86½" x 44".  
Laroche Collection,  
Kunstmuseum, Basel

STILL LIFE WITH GUITAR, 1919  
Oil, 32½" x 40". Private Collection, Basel







ANEMONES, 1924  
Oil, 11½" x 13½". Private Collection, Paris





THE GUERIDON, 1921  
Oil, 75" x 28".  
Collection of Mrs Bertram Smith,  
New York.



CANEFORE, 1926  
Oil, 63" x 28<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>".

Formerly Collection of Chester Dale,  
New York





ANEMONES IN VASE, 1927  
Oil. Collection A. M. Roger Varenne, Geneva





*Nude Study, 1922-3. Pastel, 33" x 26", Private Collection*





THE BLUE-  
AND-RED GUITAR, 19  
Oil, 17¾" x 25½".  
Private Collection,  
New York



THE GREY TABLE, 1930  
Oil, 56¾" x 23½".  
Private Collection,  
New York





ly won him a large international audience. His individual showings in Belgium, England, and the United States, which constantly increased his following, were numerous. The Carnegie prize was awarded to him in 1937, and the Grand Prize of the Venice Biennale in 1948. When he died on August 31, 1963, he was so universally recognized as one of the greatest painters of the French School that a state funeral was given him, with an ostentatious ceremony in the Cour Carrée of the Louvre Palace. It was the first time that the French Republic had paid such homage to a painter who during his career had remained aloof from all conformity and who had never demonstrated the slightest inclination for official approval.

Braque's life thus unfolded normally, almost in a banal manner, in harmony with the events, rhythm, and spirit of his age. His distinguishing feature was that he was not like everyone else, and that he differed from everyone else so naturally and so completely that he was superior to everyone else. His childhood and adolescence were passed in a turn-of-the-century atmosphere, in a provincial city, in the acceptance of what was proper and permissible, in a respectable family which was not even surprised at his fondness for painting. He was so much in harmony with his surroundings, and so humanly impregnated by his environment and his age, that he is one of those who constructed it and gave it a face consonant with intimate truths which without him would perhaps not have been expressed so intensely. The atmosphere of serenity that dominates Braque's entire work, even in his struggles, must be sought and explained within this harmony.

His adult life began, as it does for so many, after his return from his military service. The twentieth century began at the same time as his move to Paris, and the strengthening of the material and moral powers that were to transform the world and cause the decay of the old structures was being felt. For the young, yesterday's reasons were no longer tomorrow's justifications.

The Universal Exhibition of 1900 was a balance sheet which revealed the power of invention and the expansion of scientific and industrial technology, but which at the same time emphasized the poverty of the official artistic forms that were supposed to represent them. The artists felt this contradiction deeply and also their own need to attempt an artistic adventure as new as that of the world that was being built around them. This need was in such conformity with the order of things that the innovators very quickly found numerous and enthusiastic supporters, despite the violent opposition of the conservatives.

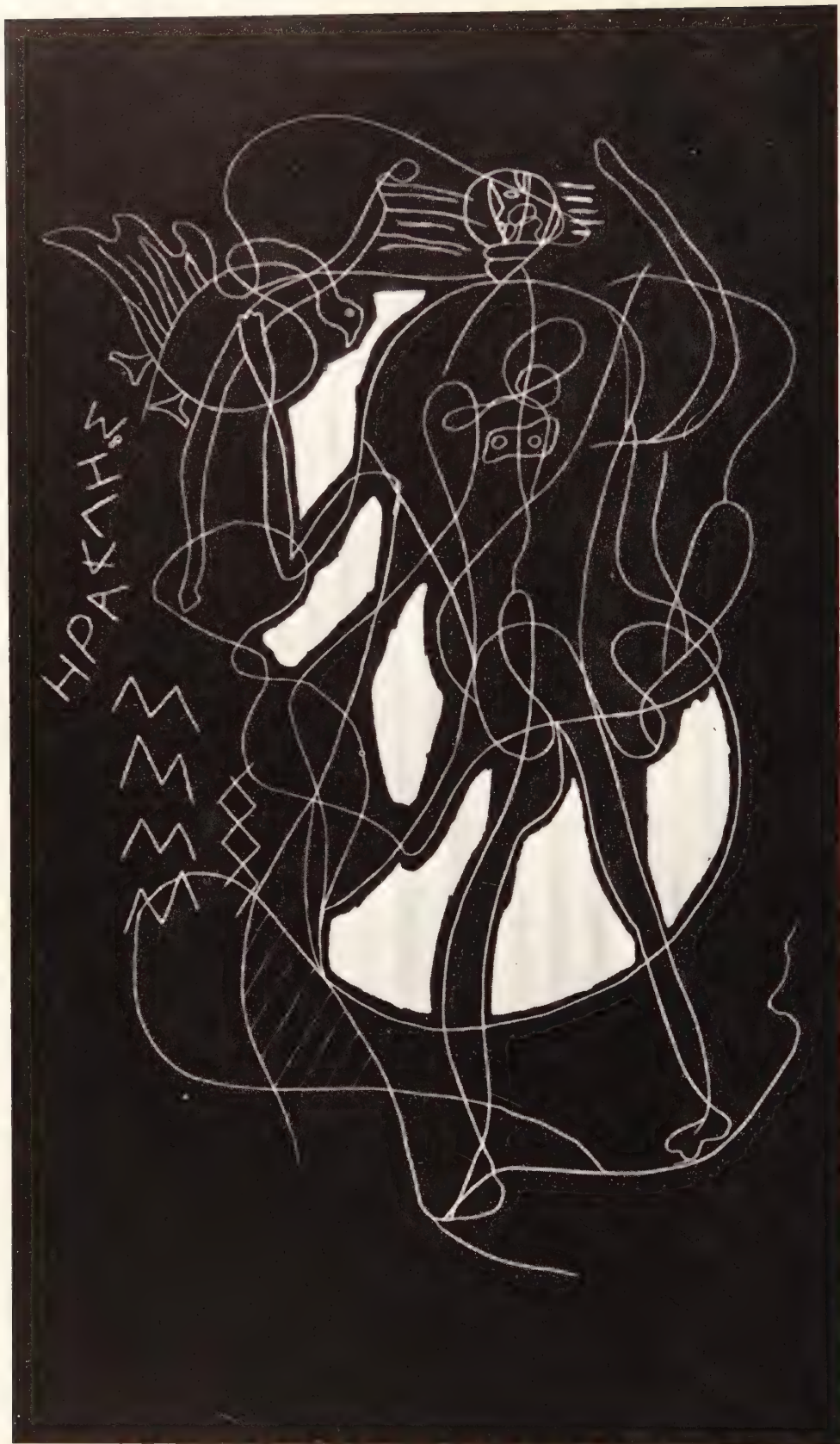
The exhibition at the Salon d'Automne of 1905, which united in one explosive room the painting of Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Manguin, Valtat, Jean Puy, and Rouault, with its pure colors, created a scandal. This, however, was not a beginning, but rather the end product of a liberation that had been begun in the closing years of the previous century and that in this instance acquired a more generalized, collective character, whereas until now it had been a matter simply of individual actions. Young Braque could not remain indifferent in the face of this awakening, which was manifesting itself with an exciting and infectious dynamism. This liberty, which had been vigorously defended by Gauguin, and the immediate consequences of which were henceforth to be visible, was not the liberty to de-



*Head of a Woman (Cahiers d'Art). Published by Christian Zervos*



Zao, 1931.  
Black pastel,  
75" x 52",  
Aimé Maeght Collection,  
Paris



✓  
Hercules, 1931.  
Black pastel,  
75" x 42",  
Aimé Maeght Collection,  
Paris



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*Still Life, About 1930. Etching, 5½" x 4½"*



THE DUET, 1937  
Oil, 51" x 39½". Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris





WOMAN PLAYING «PATIENCE», 1942  
Oil, 57" x 44½". Private Collection





WOMAN WITH A MANDOLIN, 1937  
Oil, 64" x 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Museum of Modern Art, New York





STILL LIFE WITH VASE, 1940  
Oil, 42" x 18".  
Private Collection, Paris





THE RED GUERIDON, 1942  
Oil, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Private Collection









THE BLUE WASH BASIN, 1942  
Oil, 23½" x 31½". Private Collection

7  
WOMAN AT HER TOILETTE, 1942  
Oil, 42" x 26¾".  
Private Collection





BLACKFISH, 1942. Oil, 13" x 21½". Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

pict nature with personal means that the Impressionists had forced upon the public, but the liberty, taking nature as a pretext and point of departure, to invent more ardent, more original harmonies. The use of pure colors was a means of attaining this goal. Now that the passage of time has set off its true character by freeing it of secondary elements, Fauvism appears to us as the beginning of the development of the right assumed by the artist to invent instead of to obey.

This eruption of Fauvism must have unfolded in a particularly passionate atmosphere. Gauguin had just died in 1903, and a major exhibition was devoted to him at the Salon d'Automne of 1906. That same year, 1906, was also the year of the death of Cézanne, whose influence was constantly growing. The following year a major retrospective of his work took place, organized, once again, by the Salon d'Automne.

However, in the name of this so bluntly proclaimed right to invent, Braque could be interested by Fauvism only in the form of a stage and a transition between his academic period and the period of his own creation. The fact is that he belongs to the next generation; he never participated in the elaboration of Fauvism, in the discussions and battles that marked its gestation and flowering, but simply joined a system invented by others. To be sure, he found in Fauvism an atmosphere which was new and exciting for a young artist, but at the same time that lesson of independence and courage it gave him was of value only if he himself adopted a similar attitude. In short, to become one of the followers of the inventors of Fauvism, even one of the most brilliant followers, would be to demonstrate as much lack of originality as if one were to follow the doctrines of Impressionism or any other school. The first lesson to be learned was to do something else.

Cubism was soon to be the answer offered to this question. One day Fernand Léger, who was also one of the fathers of Cubism but under a form different from that invented by Braque and Picasso, told me very simply:

*The Fauves had gone as far as possible in the field of color and light; we could only seem followers on this path. We were left with the expedient of applying ourselves to the problems of draftsmanship, composition, and space.*

However, things did not happen that simply, nor did they have this character of schematic facility. No matter how rapid the succession of movements and inventions in this revolutionary period, no matter how obvious the determination to make a break appears to us today, the fact is that there were intermediate stages. Cubism was not a phenomenon of spontaneous creation, and Braque's work is a perfect illustration of this progression of ideas and discoveries.

It is certain that his friendly relations with Friesz and Dufy — who, like Braque, but a few years earlier than he, had done their early studies and work at Le Havre — influenced his experiments for a period of two or three years. His sojourn with Friesz at Anvers in 1906 corresponds to his entrance into the Fauve movement. Similarly, his stay at L'Estaque with Raoul Dufy in 1908 belongs to the history of Cubism and proves the closeness both of the relationship between these two artists and of their work and mutual influence.





THE BLUE JUG, 1946  
Oil, 25" x 19 1/4". Private Collection, Paris





THE SUNFLOWERS, 1943  
Oil, 21½" x 18". Mme Jacqueline Delubac Collection, Paris





*Apples on Black Background, 1954. Lithograph, 12½" x 19½", Gallery Maeght, Paris*



STILL LIFE. Lithograph (Derrière le miroir Nos 48, 49) Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris



The great revolution for the men of this generation was to be the discovery of Cézanne's work and its severe exactingness, that constant tension opposed to the somewhat too amiable charms of the Impressionists. It was probably in this way that Braque began to diverge radically from the Fauves. Like the latter, he had gone to the south of France, and had given up the gentle pleasures of the valleys of the Seine. But whereas they found in the intensity of the Mediterranean sunlight the justification for their brilliant palettes, Braque, through Cézanne, was pursuing a completely contrary experiment, and brought back canvases that pushed the economy of tones and harmonies to its maximum, being reduced almost exclusively to harmonies of ochers and greens.

Here again it must be stressed that the discovery of this harmony, which Braque immediately combined with a suggestion of forms, occurred in a series of stages. His first Fauve period, that of 1906 at Anvers and of his first contacts that same year with the Midi (La Ciotat, L'Estaque), was totally dominated by color, often light, almost transparent, as in a water-color, and barely covering the canvas. In more or less large splashes it creates an atmosphere vibrating with light, without attempting to give too much detail to the structures. The desire to achieve more rigor in the construction of the painting begins to appear in 1907, when a firm draftsmanship comes to outline the color and tends to prevent the latter's diffusion. Does the explanation lie in the example of Gauguin (an exhibition of whose works, as we recall, took place in 1906), or in that of the Fauve canvases of Derain and Vlaminck, or, more simply, in the intimate conversations with Dufy, with whom he once again stayed at L'Estaque the following year?

The great change of technique in the various paintings done that year shows how uncertain Braque still was of himself in his search for his proper style, how he passed abruptly from one system to another, completely renouncing that which he had been doing previously. In the canvases of 1906 and in several canvases of 1907, color is used in large isolated splashes, without concern for form, as a means of causing space to vibrate. In contrast, Braque abruptly experiments with the outlined form, the density of the colored mass, the rigidity of the volume. The idea of rhythm through the relationships between volume and space — merely foreshadowed and implied in the early Fauve period — thus begins to become more explicit under the influence of Cézanne's work, which Braque could compare, on the spot, with the reality.

The 1908 L'Estaque landscapes are in fact directly linked to « Cézanne-ian » preoccupations. The artist's intransigence reaches a point where he eliminates everything that could be superfluous. The houses become parallelepipeds, lacking even doors and windows, which could break the unity of the planes. The trees are cylinders, their foliage consists of rigid masses. The sky is almost completely eliminated, in order to prevent any flight toward an infinite distance.

Braque was also to apply this geometrical severity, tested in his Mediterranean landscapes, to the landscapes he painted that same year in Normandy, and in which, using the methods of economy of ocher and green coloring, simplification of the volume, firmness of draftsmanship, and geometrization of the composition, he gave a unity of density to the entire sur-

face of the painting, without further concern for the tactile nature of the subject, which from then on was a pretext rather than a model. After the seascapes of 1908, moreover, for many years Braque gave up the theme of the landscape, which undoubtedly did not leave him the same faculty of concentration and silent meditation as the still life.

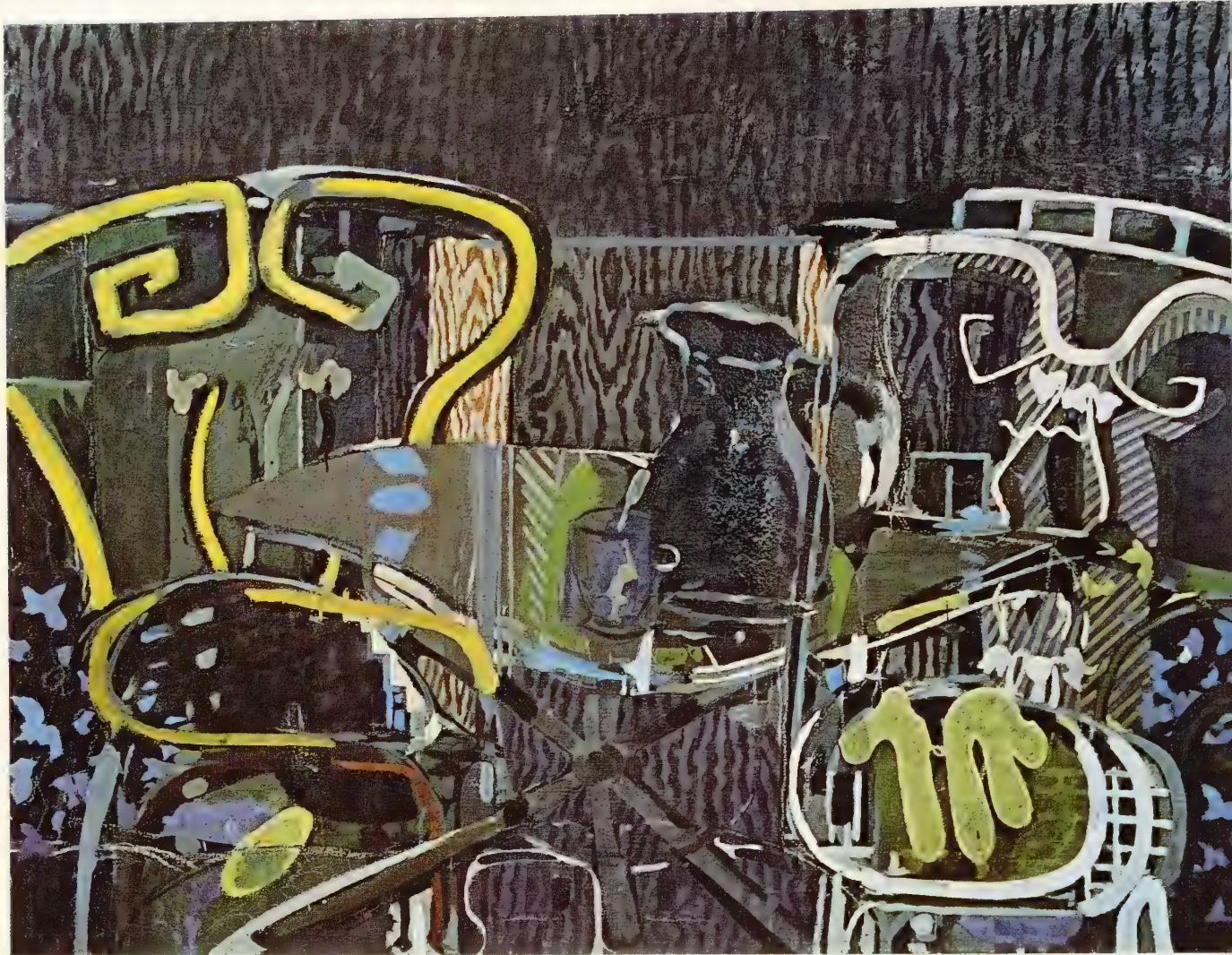
Braque's art had just entered upon a new cycle. A nude of 1907-1908 (recently bequeathed to the Louvre Museum by Mme. Cuttoli) proves that this was a definitive step, a deliberate break with the past. At the end of 1907, Guillaume Apollinaire took him to Picasso, where he witnessed the unveiling of the famous canvas which the latter had just completed and which was thenceforth to be famous in the history of modern art under the title of « *Les Femmes d'Alger*. » We can safely say that these two canvases, Braque's nude and Picasso's composition, are the birth certificate of Cubism. The two works are at once different and yet related and, consequently, make it possible to discern what unites and what separates the two artists.

In the first place, even before we analyze the mechanism of the system, we must emphasize that this is a major event. This time we can speak not of an interpretation of nature, but of total invention, without any pretext at evocation of reality. These two painters re-



*The Bird's Nest*, 1955. Etching, 10½" x 13½", Gallery Maeght, Paris





THE TERRACE, 1947  
Oil, 22½" x 36". Dr Hänggi Basle, Collection

ject all submission to the conventions of the realism on which we have been living since Gothic painting and the Renaissance; they abruptly turn to a sculptural creation born of thought and independent of the physical sensations linked to the idea of imitation.

The importance of this new orientation was not immediately evident. It seemed to become part of a general movement which since the end of the nineteenth century had been constantly developing by incorporating a series of challenges and rejections, a tendency that was spreading through almost all of Europe, notably in Germany, Austria, Russia, and was soon to reach Italy. All of these new movements, no matter how passionate and novel, were chain reactions, one giving rise to the other. But they always took the past into consideration, if only to combat it or, on occasion, to confront it and to seek in it a manner of justification. The Impressionists had been linked with Turner and the Barbizon School; Derain, after his Fauve period, was to be attracted by a certain primitivism and later by Corot. Matisse too was to return to external appearances and realistic illusions. There was nothing of this in Cubism; even when its inventors sometimes returned to realistic surface appearances, it was only a very temporary return, and did not narrow the scope of the revolution they had called into being.

Thus, not until later, when the fruits had ripened, was it understood that this was a break with the past, and especially that the phenomenon involved a new manner of seeing and depicting the world, a method that permitted no retreat. In this case, as in many others, the scope of the movement was not easily perceptible at the moment of its birth.

In this climate of excitement and reexamination of accepted ideas, numerous elements combined to make possible the elaboration of the new ideas. All of them, however, had in common the desire to escape from an order excessively dominated by the past, from a world that was too complete and in which there was no place for the ambition and originality of the coming generations. It had become necessary to forget the sclerosis of scholarly and academic knowledge and, starting out from the fundamental simplicities, to rediscover the methods of translating the complexities of the world in the process of being constructed. We should not forget that it was during the first ten years of this century that the Balkan wars began to outline a new map of Europe, and that people were witnessing the powerful implantation in daily life of such major discoveries as the cinema, the automobile, and the airplane, which were physically giving a new face to our universe.

This constant appeal from without could not leave indifferent artists who had remained as close to the life of the people as Picasso, Braque, and Léger. Once again we are witnessing the intervention of the differences in social condition of which we have already spoken. It was natural that in their search for new ways these artists were tempted to explore areas which until then had been regarded as secondary, and even mediocre, by a society whose tastes were governed by the decisions of an aristocracy organized in a strict hierarchy. The accession to power of new social classes thus logically brought about a change in aspirations, and the new artists were to seek their path outside the outworn traditions.

It could with reason be said that the discovery of the primitive arts and their sculptural expression in the stylizations of African masks inspired the first activities of Cub-





DAISIES ON A BOX, 1946  
Oil, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 25". Private Collection



STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS, 1945  
Oil, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 15". Collection of M. & Mme Silvain Blondin



ism, just as the Far East, notably through Japanese prints, had played an important role for the painters of the end of the nineteenth century. This is true insofar as these models were lessons rather than examples, and especially if we remember that they became effective only at the moment when, under the new social conditions which we have just mentioned, they corresponded to certain aspirations and seemed to provide an answer to these aspirations. Gauguin's exoticism and primitivism had appeared long before the birth of Cubism and had had no major consequences; the art of Cézanne, also, could have exerted its influence many years earlier. Thus in the evolution of ideas there is an internal progression which depends not only on the series of models proposed but on the social conditions to which the aesthetic ideas attempt to adapt themselves, as a style of writing adapts itself to the vocabulary which is to be given permanent form.

Since the end of the preceding century, as we have said, profound transformations had been in preparation; during the last few years novelties, in the field of art as in that of literature, had gone so far in the pursuit of an extreme refinement that every possibility seemed to have been explored. Thus the new artists found no outlet other than in the rediscovery of a new primitivism, which for them was incarnated either in extremely traditional folk art or in the art of the peoples of Africa and Oceania, forms of art that corresponded to their moral well-being much better than the mannerisms and decadence of the preceding generations.

Braque instinctively felt the originality of African art without seeking in it the rules of a sculpture system, as he declared in a particularly important conversation with Dora Vallier. But without becoming a system, African art nevertheless confirmed for the artists of this generation that it was possible to create a powerful sculptural expression outside of the traditional representation adopted by European civilization, and that geometry could beget rhythms and forms whose value was not purely mechanical.

In addition to its value as a return to the sources, this geometrization of the primitive schemata is consistent with the interpretation which the Cubists were then placing on Cézanne's ideas, notably by referring to a phrase in one of the latter's letters, a letter which has become famous, and in which Cézanne states that everything must be reduced to the basic volumes, the cube and the cylinder. The landscapes that Braque painted at L'Estaque in 1908 are the strict application of this principle carried to its absolute with an almost naïve neophyte's intransigence. Moreover, it is in connection with these paintings that the critic Louis Vauxcelles used the word « cube, » whence was born the label « Cubism, » which was to continue to exist even when the artists had gone beyond this simplification and invented other, more complex, schemata.

It must be remembered that Cézanne's lesson was not limited to this transformation of surface appearances. In the canvases which Braque brought back from L'Estaque there is something more important and more fundamental to be retained from the master of Aix: the discovery of the need to arrive at a total conception of the picture, which henceforth is an object in itself, independent of the realistic imitation of a motif, an object having its own architecture, space, and perspective, and which is not a series of planes obtained



DOUBLE FIGURE ON DARK BLUE GROUND, 1942  
Oil, 19½" x 19¼". Private Collection



by the methods of traditional perspective, an object which causes the work to form a homogeneous whole, closed upon itself. This change of vision in the composition and conception of the picture has been very well defined in a few words by Jean Leymarie, in his book on Braque: « The sensory values, » he writes, « are subordinated to the structural requirements. »

African art and Cézanne's painting thus liberated Braque and Picasso from the past, and gave them a totally new vigor and moral well-being. They were very soon to put the period of influences behind them and, without repudiating their sources, to begin their own experiments.

It is now an accepted practice to divide the history of Cubism into three sections: the « Cézanne » period (1907-1909), the analytical period (1910-1912), and the period of synthesis (1913-1914), with the understanding that these dates must not be taken too strictly, and with possibilities of transition from one to the other.

The « Cézanne » phase is the one we have just recalled; in the case of Braque, this is the period of study of the landscapes of Provence and their adaptation to preoccupations with space and structure. He introduces into his art a tendency toward austerity which is revealed in the economy of the palette, strictly limited to the use of green and brown. In the search for a new discipline, the major Cézanne exhibition at the Salon d'Automne of 1907 was at least as important as the surprise aroused by Picasso's « *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O. J. R. O.). »

We have already mentioned the famous Braque nude that was the first result of this twofold discovery. This nude is also the beginning of a very significant change in the choice of themes. Until then Braque had devoted himself almost exclusively to landscape. He had been completely faithful to it during his Fauve period, and confirms that his viewpoint at this moment was still rooted in the theory that « art is nature seen through a temperament. » Beginning with the influence of Cézanne, the attitude becomes completely different, since from now on it is no longer a question of being dependent on a « nature-model » but of utilizing a « nature-pretext, » which is no longer observed through a sensibility but is totally reconstructed by the will. The famous nude thus appears as a demonstration of this change, with its combination of planes and lines, its geometry in space composed of fractures and concatenations; it no longer claims to suggest the slightest realistic semblance. Under these conditions, since nature is reduced to the role of a pretext, in order to permit no misunderstanding to exist, it is necessary to carry the principle to its limit and cease to evoke external appearances and their arrangement.

Beginning in 1908, and for many years thereafter, Braque gave up the landscape; he assigned it no role in his development of Cubism, and did not return to it until much later, around 1928, and then quite briefly, after he had passed through other stages.

This « Cézanne period » is thus a period of awakening to certain problems which were to become Cubism's *raison d'être*, and the search for methods of solving them. The essence of the doctrine was very rapidly framed. However, the principles and the codification of the methods were not erected into a system until some time after the creation of the works. Braque and Picasso always followed a pattern of behavior that was in large part



*An Offering, 1942. Etching on Plaster, 10½" x 8½", Formerly Collection of the Artist*





WOMAN WITH A BOOK, 1945  
Oil, 50" x 38". Collection of Dr & Mme Soulas, Paris





THE STUDIO III, 1949  
Oil, 56½" x 69". Collection Hänggi, Basel





*Toreador*, 1952. Pencil drawing, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", Private Collection

instinctive, which explains the fact that in all circumstances their work remains above all supremely alive, even when it voluntarily adopts a method.

The first experiments were made on the inventory of the elements that should form the painting and contribute to its construction—elements reduced to their essence, and from which, consequently, any details that might have a picturesque appearance likely to retain attention, to the detriment of the form itself, must be eliminated. The role of the still life in this research thus became of major importance, for the still life lends itself better than any other theme to the experiences and metamorphoses which the artist wishes to impose on reality.

Just as it was necessary to restrict oneself to a limited range of tones in order to avoid the temptations of charm and the fantasies of color, so too, in order not to let himself be led into excessively complex displays of skill and plays of form, the artist had to limit himself to the simplest objects: the bottle, the glass, the fruit dish, the guitar, the flute, and the violin were quickly to become, and remain throughout the entire history of Cubism, the almost exclusive elements of a vocabulary that made possible a sufficient number of combinations to allow the transition from the arrangement of the landscape as experienced to that of the still life as willed.

Braque immediately broke up the traditional concatenation of forms, and broke the object into large pieces of planes which, when regrouped in another perspective, dislocated the cohesion of the traditional space. Each object is henceforth composed of fragments of its surface, and every fragment assumes its autonomy in order to establish relationships with the other fragments, relationships that are different from those they have in the real world. In other words, for the traditional rhythm which links objects together, Cubism substitutes a new rhythm invented by the artist.

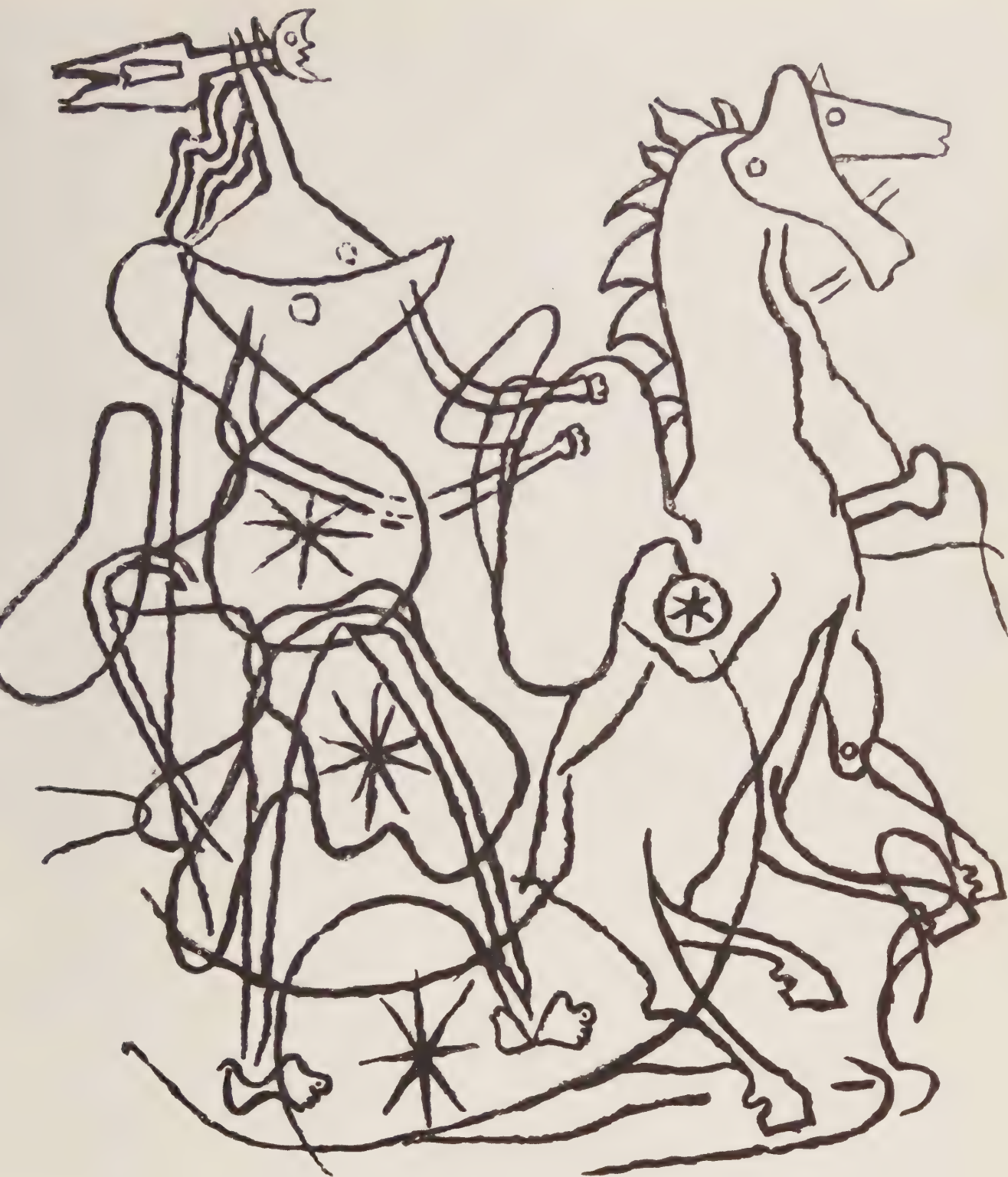
Thus we witness the appearance of the desire to dismiss the idea of imitation, so that the work will be more completely the fruit of an idea. But this does not constitute a total break with the real; for a certain period, in fact, the desire to retain a few traces of the latter is revealed in strange experiments that simultaneously juxtapose different aspects of the object seen under various angles, showing at once the face and the profile, or even the back of the object. For example, the tabletop combines its actual rectangular shape with that of the trapezium given by perspective; the silhouette of the glass or bottle is represented in its vertical contour, but the surface of the liquid or the opening of the vessel is round, as we know it is in reality, and not oval, as perspective would have it. In other words, it is a question of finding a series of compromises between what one knows and what one sees. Actually this formula in no way corresponds to an intention of realism; it is a means of dislocating space, as we have noted, and of finding new structures for it. The development of the volume in plane surfaces creates multiple angles which, without denying space, compel it to yield to the requirements and to accept the two dimensions of the painting.

This work of restructuring of space by the simultaneity of viewpoints, which was accomplished during the « Cézanne » period and which inevitably constituted a break with





HELIOS VI, MAUVE, 1948  
Lithograph, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 18". Ed. Kahnweiler, Paris



*Helios I, 1946. Lithograph, 10½" x 9", Private Collection*





*Greek Head, 1951. Etching, 17½" x 22½", Gallery Maeght, Paris*

the past, had of necessity to be followed by a work of reconstruction, the beginnings of which, moreover, we already see in this first period. Before going further, the artist feels the need to compose the instruments of this new language more precisely. In order to innovate, it is not enough to select objects (mandolins or fruit dishes). Above all, one must not let oneself be trapped in the mirage of their simplicity and risk being once again a victim of the said objects. Now that they have been adopted, they must henceforth be destroyed as objects, only the plastic signs which compose them being retained.

We have now reached the analytical period and that series of quite hermetic works in which Braque and Picasso, in total communion, express themselves in a manner that is barely decipherable, and are so preoccupied with their research that they even disregard

their personalities almost completely, to the point that very often it is difficult to say, without reading the signature, whether one of these paintings should be attributed to one artist or the other.

The object dissolves, the form disintegrates; the only thing that is still identifiable is the sign, a sign that is not a graphism, a sign that is a moment of space, something as abstract and real as a musical score.

In order to study and utilize to the maximum the effects of color and its radiance in light, Impressionism began by decomposing it in order to better know its possibilities and the mechanisms of its elements. By organizing its isolated strokes, Impressionism recomposed it in order to obtain a brilliance truer and more lasting than that of realistic surface appearances. Cubism follows the same procedure: it decomposes the form and reduces the surface to planes and signs, in order to destroy the volume and recompose it in rhythms in space. The relationship (certainly involuntary) with Impressionism is so obvious and so unavoidable that in order to achieve the desired result the Cubists also had recourse to the infinite fragmentation of the pictorial material utilized in small strokes.

In order to understand thoroughly the similarities and differences between Impressionism and the analytical period of Cubist painting, we need only compare the latter with Claude Monet's paintings of the façade of Rouen Cathedral. In both cases we stand before a surface infinitely broken up by a scintillation that destroys the idea of volume. But Impressionism adopted a vague manner; Cubism constructed a diagram, a geometrical form. In the first case the surface is vaporous and diluted with light; in the second, it is an overlapping of rigid planes. In Impressionism, this infinite division leaves a certain density in the painted surface; in Cubism, there is only total transparency, to the benefit of an indeterminate space.

The violence of this dislocation was to be carried to the extreme, to the point of replacing every other formula of representation. Braque, like Picasso, was to go so far as to utilize it in the depiction — if we may use this word — of the human body. A hand, an eye, a pipe, a portion of a bottle, the handle of a pitcher, the scroll of a violin, all hint at an intention and a presence, but they do not go beyond an allusion, and nothing in the technique or the material differentiates one of these details from the others. In 1911, for the first time, in a composition entitled « *The Portuguese* », Braque even introduces isolated letters of type, as if to accentuate by this mechanical reality the sign rather than the object-value he gives to all the elements of the painting.

The painting acquires an astonishing unity: a mobile and modulated surface. It lives in a completely autonomous fashion within its limits and in its light; it does not attempt to create the slightest illusion, and cannot be interpreted as being anything other than what it is. We can find in it neither a *trompe l'oeil* nor a setting, neither a sentimental anecdote nor a memory. It is a painting restricted to itself with increasing severity, and undoubtedly it was in order to emphasize physically this necessary concentration that Braque began to enclose his compositions within an oval contour, in order to impose frontiers on this total, closed world, which had neither the desire nor the possibility to expand.



The moment had finally come to go beyond this tumult of ideas. The break with the past was complete. The inventory of intentions and methods had been made. It was now necessary to begin the constructive period, the period which we call the synthesizing phase. For, summarizing what had been destroyed, what had been won, and what had been elaborated through more or less chance experiments, it was possible and necessary to work at constructing and affirming a stability that was to place Cubism on a plane different from the successes, discussions, and temporary achievements which until then had marked, from day to day, the steps in its development.

This determination to synthesize was to permit Cubism to grasp aggressively its true significance in the evolution of art, and demonstrate its more or less conscious attachment to the rules of classicism. The picture now begins to be organized in large unified surfaces, cadenced by very simple geometrical diagrams, straight or curved lines which, under the pretext of utilizing forms of known objects, reduce the surface to a combination of extremely simple geometrics. The scintillation of space disappears, and is replaced by a serene stability.

In this austerity which has been retained and which is no longer utilized as a sentimental attitude, an effort, or a desire for asceticism but rather as the affirmation of a dignity finally conquered, and in order to better emphasize that which is definitive in this accomplishment, color begins to reappear in large areas without destroying the purity of this severity. It is true that it is still very restrained, and that its economy emphasizes the elegance which emerges from the new propositions. Braque's most astonishing invention of this period is that of the collage, which appears for the first time in 1912, in the « *Still Life with Fruit Dish*. » It is an integration of realistic elements into a composition in which they acquire a sculptural value all the greater in that they lose their significance as real objects; there is an incorporation of such incongruous materials as newspapers, cigarette wrappers, matchboxes, and wallpaper, and efforts are made to eliminate the resulting disharmonies, in order to find an equilibrium other than the one too easily obtained by the use of painting alone. A very simple drawing links the diverse elements on these fragments of paper. Around the end of 1912, a painted portion imitating wood or marble is sometimes added to this complex play of new values, and imposes itself more as a discipline than as a fantasy.

Color is now an integral part of both the object represented and the painting itself. It is not an addition of light; it belongs to the structure of the work. Nor does it originate in the spirit of Caravaggism, by which the color comes from the light and serves to dramatize the story; by its unity, its calm surface animation, and the static order that emerges from it, it belongs more to the conception of the Italian primitives. The desire to achieve a new classicism, to forget that for centuries painting had been trying to be a mirror of reality, is thus confirmed. The new research tends to construct a truth in itself-what is known today as a conceptual art, that is, one that substitutes that which is conceived for that which but lately was observed.

Cubism reached its highest peaks during this period of synthesis. Several years earlier one could have thought that a certain fantasy and even a certain challenge were being introduced in the activity of these young men who wished to reject *a priori* that which pre-



THE NIGHT, 1951  
Oil, 63" x 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>".  
Collection Aimé Maeght, Paris





HESPERIS, 1956  
Bronze, 16¼" x 10". Private Collection



HYMEN, 1957  
Bronze, 29½" x 19½". Private Collection





THE LARGE GUERIDON, 1950  
Oil, 71" x 27½". Private Collection



THE BIRD AND ITS NEST, 1956  
Oil, 51½" x 66½". Formerly in the artist's collection









THE ECHO, 1956  
Oil, 51" x 63½". Private Collection

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BIRD IN FLIGHT, 1961  
Lithograph, Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris





RESURRECTION OF THE BIRD, 1959. Lithograph, 8¼" x 15". Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris

ceded them. In the period which we regard as the affirmation of classicism, no equivocation remains; on the contrary, we are in the presence of an art which now contains no improvisation, an art of very high tone, because those who are practicing it have experimented with its methods before achieving this level.

The classicism of Cubism is so obvious that later, when its commentators wished to link it with a tradition, they mentioned Seurat, Ingres, Poussin, and Piero della Francesca as examples. But it must be clearly understood that the comparison with these masters concerns the acceptance of a similar discipline, a state of mind which wishes to construct a certain order but does not signify the slightest rallying to realistic depiction.

The war of 1914 interrupted this period; Braque was drafted, seriously wounded, trepanned. Events on the historical level confirmed the intentions of the painters: the world was entering a new cycle, seeking a new equilibrium. The equilibrium invented by the Cubists for their art withstood the circumstances, and when in 1917 Braque, healed and emerging from a long convalescence, went back to work, he felt no need to repudiate his past. On the contrary, repeating the lessons of this new classicism, he carried the stylization of the forms still further, in order to invent much more complex compositions, while accepting a more varied participation of color.

The works of Picasso and Juan Gris paved the way for this final stage of Cubism, which from then on forms a very coherent system of representation, perfectly prepared to respond to the different temperaments of the disciples, who can now adapt it to their possibilities, and make it so complete that its creators will begin to withdraw, since they have nothing more either to add to it or to discover in it.

From this moment on, Braque's art was to be dependent only on itself. It would be incorrect to say that Cubism was only a temporary stage. The fact is that Braque had fulfilled himself admirably well within it, and what he was to do thereafter, no matter how original and perfect it might be, would never push this period back onto a secondary level. He was never to forget what he had learned during this extraordinary experiment, which had lasted only about a decade.

In 1918 his paintings begin a completely different cycle: they are copious still lifes which massively occupy the foreground. The geometry of the Cubist compositions becomes softer, and its space becomes less impersonal. These modifications are to be accentuated during the coming years: the forms acquire a great suppleness, and are surrounded by curves and sinuous contours. The surfaces are sometimes animated by small strokes, and become a living material, varied, modeled, and as savory as a pulpy fruit. The space does not rediscover the distant perspectives of realism; however, it does lose its inertia and neutrality. The entire painting takes on a vibration, we are tempted to say a sonority, to such an extent that we feel modulations created by the relationships of closely associated forms, colors, and materials.

The still lifes, arranged on a pedestal table or a mantelpiece, repeat in a new manner certain customs earlier adopted by Braque. Thus the objects, heaped up in compact masses on the table, are framed by the latter's contours, just as in the earlier Cubist period





*Hunting, 1954. Etching, 6½" x 10", Museum of Art, Basle*

they would have been surrounded by an oval frame. The space between the piece of furniture and the wall is perceptible, although it has no optical depth and does not break the unity of the surface of the picture. The compositions are laid out according to vertical or horizontal dominants, often controlled or accentuated by the dimensions of the picture, which are deliberately of unusual size, whether in width or in height.

The Cubist manner of grouping objects into a composition that is very dense and complex in its combinations remains, as does the Cubist way of vertically rearranging the elements that should be seen horizontally, thus eliminating distances and torsions linked with the perspective of the foreground. Thus the identical value of massiveness governs all parts of the picture, without, however, suppressing the importance of the central motif.

Cubism had obtained this order by the reduction of forms to their geometrical scheme. In his new orientation Braque, on the contrary, departs further and further from this

discipline, to the benefit of a more supple and more visible play by which the sinuous lines retain and enclose the forms. Thus the softening of the surface appearances, which seems such a visible departure from the severity sought by Cubism, does not appear as a compensation or a repudiation.

In its new form, Braque's painting continues to retain the same accent of gravity that was to mark his art to the end, whatever its metamorphoses. Even in its various incarnations of the twenties, and despite the contact with a society disturbed by the disorders and excesses of the postwar period, the artist was able to retain a sense of the moderation which gives a great dignity to everything he undertook.

The color that Cubism had eliminated once again becomes preponderant during these years, not only in its quality as a color area but also through its close participation in the drawing, which it accentuates and brings to life. Sometimes it is itself drawing, by the outline of a white contour around the forms, an outline that simultaneously isolates each color from the others and links them together. To a certain extent, it plays the role of the leading in the partitioning of a stained-glass window, but in white instead of black; that is, through it the colors are strengthened and the ensemble is lightened.

At other times this method of outlining by painted drawing begins the line of a tracing in one tonality and continues it in another. Thus the shadow-light contrasts are an integral part of all the elements of the painting, and are served by the technical methods. Braque accentuates the contrasts by frequently eliminating the halftones and shadings for the intermediate passages in the modeling of a form. The object is abruptly cut by a line, and in this way the geometry of Cubism is reintroduced into the flowing composition of the painter, with, however, greater subtlety, and in conjunction with other elements. This twofold play of shadow-light and rigidity-suppleness constitutes a new system of representation which was later to be used for the human figure, and which would juxtapose two interlocking profiles or superimpose a frontal view and a profile, a skillful adaptation of the Cubist procedure of reconstructing the object by combining its various possibilities of forms.

The use of white and black, extolled by Cubism, was not forgotten, despite this resumption of polychromy. Both find room within a new harmony, not so much as an absence of color (that is, in a negative fashion, used in the service of a decision to exclude other tones), but on the contrary as color values themselves, all the stronger in that they always play a role of affirmation.

Around 1923, and especially in 1926, after a long period completely occupied by still lifes, Braque returned to the human figure, and it is perhaps in the large female nudes that he painted at this time under the title « *The Canephorae* » that the path he has travelled is best seen. They are figures of great nobility which we are tempted to call elegant, despite their somewhat massive stature, figures which have the nobility of caryatids by virtue of the amplitude of their proportions and their hieratic immobility. They are probably the most visible trace in Braque's painting of the attraction exerted on him by Greek antiquity.

Another episodic theme, the landscape, reappeared in 1928-1929, corresponding to his return to Normandy, to his vacation in Dieppe in 1929, and to his acquisition in 1930 of a



house at Varengeville in the environs of that city, where Braque henceforth came very often both to work and to rest. It is important to emphasize that his conception of the landscape was now very different from the one which presided over his still lifes, and from the one which he had adopted during the L'Estaque period. It is related to the aesthetics of the theatre set by the simplification of the planes and their arrangement into parallel motifs for the ground, and by the low cliffs which rise at the sides, like the framing of a scene. Braque, moreover, had composed the sets and costumes for *Les Fâcheux* for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1923, and in the following year those of *Salade* for the Soirées de Paris, then those of *Zéphyr et Fiore*, once again for Diaghilev. Despite this theatrical conception of composition, Braque's landscape proves his need to rediscover a direct contact with nature, closer than in the still lifes, a contact which thus appears as a means of defense against systematic attitudes.

However, there are in truth several cases, around 1930-1932, in which the painter seems to have been tempted by more intellectual, more total transcriptions. They are reclining nudes which at least in their appearance are related to Picasso's bathers at Dinard (1928). But while the deliberate distortions of both offer certain similarities, a completely different state of mind emerges from each: a tense and aggressive agitation in Picasso's work, a serene calm in Braque's.

For Braque, however, this seems to have been merely a transitional period without permanent consequences, with the possible exception of an organization of the canvas into large areas with rounded contours which cross the entire composition, and which we shall rediscover in a new series of still lifes. By virtue of this fact, the latter is arranged in a rhythm which is much more simplified, less jerky, and less fragmented than that of the earlier still lifes. The color does not always follow the contours of the form as defined by the drawing, and we feel in their simplification the temptation of a more cerebral, almost abstract, expression in order to make the rhythm summarized by these elongated masses more palpable.

No matter how ephemeral these attempts in favor of the landscape and the nude, they nevertheless have a profound significance: the endless curiosity of the artist, not because of instability, or dissatisfaction with what he has achieved, but out of a need to experiment with the multiple possibilities of expression. The changes which we find in the structure of the picture find equivalents in the modifications of the palette. We have seen how the use of white and black gave greater accent to the contrasts. Braque was led from here to a richer polychromy; from then on, after having been dominated by brown and red harmonies and reinforced by the greens, this polychromy was soon to create clear contrasts developing in a light atmosphere with transparent golden hues.

By its transformation the theme of the still lifes led to a new stage in which the tabletop is more heavily laden, the background wall more richly decorated. These two elements — the objects in the foreground and the wall decoration — were soon to form a very homogeneous whole made coherent by the elimination of the isolating boundaries formed by the contours of the pedestal table. It was no longer still lifes that Braque was painting around 1936-1939, but interiors containing still lifes, interiors in which he went so far as to introduce human figures.



BIRDS IN THE CLOUDS, 1960. Lithograph, 16½" x 27¼". Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris





BIRD PASSING THROUGH A CLOUD, 1957. Lithograph, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris





BIRD PASSING THROUGH A CLOUD, 1957. Lithograph, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris





EQUINOX, 1962. Lithograph, 20½" x 13¼". Ed. Galerie Maeght, Paris

The limitation of the surfaces is no longer that of Cubism, which turns the subject in upon itself and encloses it in a geometrical frame — rectangular or oval — which is part of the painting. The artist returns to the formula of Impressionism, which cuts the scene into a section of space and permits us to assume the existence of an external continuation.

The role of the figure, generally a woman, is very important in the general movement and the atmosphere of this vibrant intimacy. The color counts not only as a mass, but also by the design which it outlines in a filiform development indicating sometimes the decoration of the wall, sometimes the arabesque of a piece of furniture.

Braque went no further in the interdependence of form, color, and design in order to achieve a plastic surface vibrating in every respect. Similarly, he went no further in the use of the invented signs which seem to imitate reality. Several paintings of 1940 once again indicate an orientation toward simplified syntheses, but the painter renounces none of the work he had done in the years immediately preceding, and does not depart from this idea of space at once extensible and controlled, of which he had acquired supreme mastery.

Often, too, we feel that he is again tempted by experiments with more vibrant materials, with crumbly surfaces and visible traces of the brushstroke, physical expression in order to touch the sensibility directly, a way of being that is distantly related to Impressionism and that he was to develop still more freely several years later, notably in paintings of flowers. Was it by chance that several canvases, beginning in 1943, take up the theme of the sunflower, so dear to Van Gogh and Gauguin? Can we not see in it, in the total liberty now accorded him by his great past, the share granted to instinctive notation, sensory expansion, inspiration without the control of ideas? This liberty continued to lead him to a greater simplicity.

Around 1949 he added to his repertory of forms the theme of the bird in flight, and integrated it into a new series of « *Studios* », cluttered with objects. Then he decided to isolate it, to launch it into a space completely emptied of any accessory, but alive, as if he hoped in this way to achieve the maximum amount of spirituality. In truth, this silhouette of the bird in flight has the complex simplicity of a symbolic figure; he was to give it monumental dimensions when in 1952, having been commissioned to decorate the ceiling of the Salle Henri II in the Louvre Museum, he outlined on it in white, on a blue background, this great flight.

The fact is that in Braque's work there is always the motive, more or less clearly expressed, of discovery of a symbolic language. But this temptation finds no possibility of manifesting itself clearly in painting, although it is possible that it was not totally foreign to the elaboration of Cubism by the depersonalization of the objects. This is perhaps still more probable in the interiors with figures, beginning in 1936-1937, in which the women are somewhat like phantoms, with no consistency other than the forms that surround them and with which they almost merge. This presence of mystery, this attempt at dematerialization, is almost a negation of the form.



On the contrary, in sculpture and engraving (probably because here the artist was no longer preoccupied with problems characteristic of the painted canvas and the significations of space it implies), Braque became a prodigious inventor of idols. In both disciplines he proposes images of pagan gods which return to the syntheses of antiquity. His mythology is living, and immediately and without hesitation he achieves the maximum of presence and authenticity. One is tempted to say that his sculpture and his engraving have almost no relation to his painting. In our opinion this is due first of all to the fact that Braque completely reinvented new methods when he utilized a new material, but especially, — and as a consequence of the foregoing — because in Braque the craftsman remained intensely alive and surfaced at the first opportunity. It appeared, to be sure, in his painting, in the imitation of wood and the introduction of type and then of pieces of paper and other materials. However, these elements then participate simply as accessories in the service of painting to justify and glorify the latter. In this case they help to solve the problem of suggesting a three-dimensional space on a surface that has only two.

In sculpture, these problems no longer arise; the volume is a real volume, the material is a true stone or a genuine metal. The confrontation between thought and material, between the intellectual and the physical, is immediate. The transmutation from one domain to the other is done without intermediary. Consequently the idols are born and seem to be a natural emanation, without belonging especially to a period or to a civilization, but having the power of inevitable facts. Better than any other achievement, they reveal the instinctive feeling for the sacred.

ICARIOS, 1961 Piece of Jewelry. Clip, 4 1/2" x 4 1/8". French National Collection

Similarly, in engraving the line is a line; it follows the unfolding of thought, with no constraint other than this thought. The image is born automatically of the mechanical outline, like a style of writing, a calligraphy. Nothing could be more natural and spontaneous than Braque's notebooks, each page of which is composed of texts and drawings, closely intermingled, with no discontinuity and no difference in material separating them. These notebooks, with the observations of the artist collected by Dora Vallier, are the most important document that can be consulted concerning Braque's ideas; they are more important than any other study, including even the remarkable works of Jean Paulhan, Jean Leymarie, Maurice Gieure, Carl Einstein, and Stanislas Fumet.

The stained-glass windows (Varengueville, 1953-1954), theatre sets, ceramics, tapestries, and jewelry executed from models of Braque also deserve to be noted as testimony of the extension of his art to other disciplines, but we should not look here for an enrichment as exceptional as in the other areas.

In summary, whether we study him from the point of view of his techniques, or through his aesthetic choices, Braque's work includes a series of cycles that are clearly determined and autonomous, even if some serve to explain the others.

In each cycle we have seen the artist go further and further toward simplifications, toward those simplifications which simultaneously concern drawing, form, and color, those which in many cases, at the maximum of the essential, are at their birth fully perceptible only to the initiated, just as at the maximum of acquaintance knowledge tends to pour the entire science and explanation of the world into a few signs. But this equation is at first legible and acceptable only to an infinitesimal number of other initiates, even though every one of the terms and signs of this equation seems comprehensible because it belongs to the common language. We must therefore wait until the exceptional has come into common use. The distortions of Cubism and its sequels, after having been refused by the great majority of the public, became part of popular taste, and Braque was no longer scandalized. The work was sifted, freed of the surprise effects which masked its deepest qualities, and everyone now recognizes in it the most fundamental resonances of our age.





## BIOGRAPHY

1882. May 13; Birth of Georges Braque at Argenteuil. His family operates a house-painting business.
1890. The Braque family leaves Argenteuil and settles in Le Havre.
1893. Georges becomes a pupil at the *lycée* of Le Havre.
1897. Evening courses at the École des Beaux-Arts.
1899. Begins his apprenticeship with the painter-decorator Roney.
1900. Arrives in Paris. Apprenticeship with La-berthe. Lives in Montmartre and attends evening courses in drawing at the École des Batignolles.
1901. Military service.
1902. Returns to Paris. Lives in the rue Lepic, attends the Académie Humbert.
1903. Brief attendance at the École des Beaux-Arts, in Léon Bonnat's class.
1904. Sojourns in Brittany and Normandy.
1905. Settles in the rue d'Orsel in Montmartre. Becomes acquainted with the critic Maurice Raynal and the sculptor Manolo.
1906. Exhibits seven paintings at the Salon des Indépendants. Sojourns at Anvers, with Friesz, and then at L'Estaque, near Marseille.
1907. Sends six paintings to the Salon des Indépendants. Becomes acquainted with Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, then with Apollinaire, Kahnweiler, and Picasso. The latter shows him his « *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. »
1908. Exhibits at the Salon des Indépendants. First Cubist paintings, notably the study of a nude. In November, first one-man exhibition at the Galerie Kahnweiler in the rue Vignon.
1909. Sends Cubist paintings to the Salon des Indépendants. Stays for a time at La Roche-Buyon, near Mantes. Works with Picasso.
1911. Sojourn at Céret with Picasso.
1912. Second sojourn with Picasso, at Sorgues. Marriage to Marcelle Lapré. First collages.
1913. Meets Picasso, Gris, and Max Jacob at Céret. Returns to Sorgues.
1914. War is declared. Braque is called up at Sorgues.
1915. May 11: Braque suffers a head wound at Carency (Artois); is trepanned.
1916. End of his convalescence at Sorgues. Is discharged from the army.
1917. January 15: A banquet is given in his honor, to celebrate his return to health. Léonce Rosenberg becomes his dealer.
1919. Exhibits at the Galerie « L'Effort Moderne, » run by Léonce Rosenberg.
1920. First sculpture: a standing nude. Exhibits at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne.
1922. Leaves Montmartre for Montparnasse. Exhibits an important body of work at the Salon d'Automne.
1923. Sets for *Les Fâcheux*, ballet put on by Serge Diaghilev.
1924. Sets for *Salade*, at the Soirées de Paris of Count Etienne de Beaumont.
1925. Sets for *Zéphyr et Fiore* for the Diaghilev ballet.
- 1927-1929. Vacations at Dieppe.
1930. Settles in Varengeville near Dieppe.
1933. Major retrospective at Basel.
1934. Exhibition in London.
1936. Exhibition in Brussels.
1937. Carnegie Foundation prize.
- 1939-1940. Retrospectives in Chicago, Washington, and San Francisco. When the German army invades France, escapes to the Limousin and then to the Pyrenees. Returns to Paris.
1943. His paintings fill an entire room at the Salon d'Automne.
1945. Exhibits in Amsterdam and Brussels. Serious illness.
1947. First exhibition at the Galerie Maeght.
1948. Grand Prix International for painting at the Venice Biennale.
1949. Sets for Molière's *Tartuffe*.
1952. Decorates ceiling of a room in the Musée du Louvre.
- 1953-1954. Windows for the church at Varengeville.
1961. The Musée du Louvre holds a Braque exhibition: « L'Atelier de Braque. »
1963. August 31: Braque dies in Paris.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Braque's work occupies an important place in every history of contemporary art. Articles about him have been published in all the art magazines, some of which have even published special numbers devoted to him, viz.:

*Cahiers d'Art* - 1933

*Soirées de Paris* - April 1914

*Le Point* - October 1953

*Sélection* - 1924

*Verve* - 1955

*Derrière le Miroir* - Since 1947, has published numerous special numbers on the occasion of the various exhibitions organized at the Galerie Maeght.

The principal monographs are by:

Bissière (Paris), 1920

Raynal (Rome), 1924

Isarlo (Paris), 1932

Carl Einstein (Paris), 1934

Stanislas Fumet (Paris), 1941 and 1945

Gallatin (New York), 1943

Paulhan (Paris), 1945

F. Ponge (Geneva), 1947

J. Grenier (Paris), 1948

D. Cooper (London), 1948

P. Reverdy (Paris), 1949

H. R. Hope (New York), 1949

Lejard (Paris), 1949

Ponge (Paris), 1950

Stanislas Fumet (Paris), 1951

L. G. Bucheim (Feldafing), 1952

Seuphor (Paris), 1953

Laufer (Bern), 1954

Cassou (Paris), 1956

Gieure (Paris), 1956

Verdet (Geneva), 1956 and 1959

Richardson (London), 1959

Russell (London), 1959

Richardson (Milan), 1960

Zervos (Paris), 1960

Leymarie (Geneva), 1961

Mourlot (Monte Carlo), 1963

Dora Vallier (Basel), 1968.

Les Éditions Maeght is continuing the publication in several volumes of the descriptive catalogue of Braque's work, prepared by Madame N. Mangin.



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